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LETTERS

ON

AMERICAN SLAVERY

FROM

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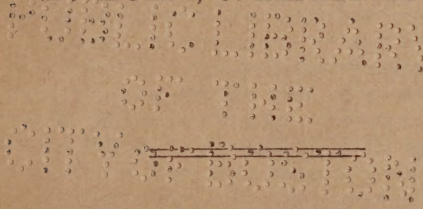
VICTOR HUGO, DE TOCQUEVILLE, EMILE DE GIRARDIN, CARNOT, PASSY, MAZZINI, HUMBOLDT, O. LAFAYETTE—&c.



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LETTERS

VICTOR HUGO ON JOHN BROWN

To the Editor of the London News:

Sir: When our thoughts dwell upon the United States of America, a majestic form rises before the eye of imagination. It is a Washington!

Look, then, to what is taking place in that country of Washington at this present moment.

In the Southern States of the Union there are slaves; and this circumstance is regarded with indignation, as the most monstrous of inconsistencies, by the pure and logical conscience of the Northern States. A white man, a free man, John Brown, sought to deliver these negro slaves from bondage. Assuredly, if insurrection is ever a sacred duty, it must be when it is directed against Slavery. John Brown endeavored to commence the work of emancipation by the liberation of slaves in Virginia. Pious, austere, animated with the old Puritan spirit, inspired by the spirit of the Gospel, he sounded to these men, these oppressed brothers, the rallying cry of Freedom. The slaves, enervated by servitude, made no response to the appeal. Slavery afflicts the soul with weakness. Brown, though deserted, still fought at the head of a handful of heroic men; he was riddled with balls; his two young sons, sacred martyrs, fell dead at his side, and he himself was taken. This is what they call the affair at Harper's Ferry.

John Brown has been tried, with four of his comrades, Stephens, Coppic, Green and Copeland.

What has been the character of his trial? Let us sum it up in a few words: —

John Brown, upon a wretched pallet, with six half gaping wounds, a gun-shot wound in his arm, another in his loins, and two in his head, scarcely conscious of surrounding sounds, bathing his mattress in blood, and with the ghastly presence of his two dead sons ever beside him; his four fellow-sufferers wounded, dragging themselves along by his side; Stephens bleeding from four sabre wounds; justice in a hurry, and overleaping all obstacles; an attorney, Hunter, who wishes to proceed hastily, and a judge, Parker, who suffers him to have his way; the hearing cut short, almost every application for delay refused, forged and mutilated documents produced, the witnesses for the defence kidnapped, every obstacle thrown in the way of the prisoner's counsel, two cannon loaded with canister stationed in the Court, orders given to the jailers to shoot the prisoners if they sought to escape, forty minutes of deliberation, and three men sentenced to die! I declare on my honor that all this took place, not in Turkey, but in America!

Such things cannot be done with impunity in the face of the civilized world. The universal conscience of humanity is an ever-watchful eye. Let the judges of Charlestown, and Hunter and Parker, and the slaveholding jurors, and the whole population of Virginia, ponder it well: they are watched! They are not alone in the world. At this moment, America attracts the eyes of the whole of Europe.

John Brown, condemned to die, was to have been hanged on the 2d of December — this very day.

But news has just reached us. A respite has been granted to him. It is not until the 16th that he is to die. The interval is a brief one. Before it has ended, will a cry of mercy have had time to make itself effectually heard?

No matter! It is our duty to speak out.

Perhaps a second respite may be granted. America is a noble nation. The impulse of humanity springs quickly into life among a free people. We may yet hope that Brown will be saved.

If it were otherwise, if Brown should die on the scaffold on the 16th of December, what a terrible calamity! The executioner of Brown, let us avow it openly (for the day of

the Kings is past, and the day of the peoples dawns, and to the people we are bound frankly to speak the truth) — the executioner of Brown would be neither the attorney Hunter, nor the judge Parker, nor the Governor Wise, nor the State of Virginia; it would be, though we can scarce think or speak of it without a shudder, the whole American Republic.

The more one loves, the more one admires, the more one venerates that Republic, the more heart-sick one feels at the contemplation of such a catastrophe. A single State ought not to have the power to dishonor all the rest, and in this case there is an obvious justification for a federal intervention. Otherwise, by hesitating to interfere when it might prevent a crime, the Union becomes a participator in its guilt. No matter how intense may be the indignation of the generous Northern States, the Southern States force them to share the opprobrium of this murder. All of us, no matter who we may be, who are bound together as compatriots by the common tie of a democratic creed, feel ourselves in some measure compromised. If the scaffold should be erected on the 16th of December, the incorruptible voice of history would thenceforward testify that the august Confederation of the New World, had added to all its rites of holy brotherhood a brotherhood of blood, and the *fasces* of that splendid Republic would be bound together with the running noose that hung from the gibbet of Brown!

This is a bond that kills.

When we reflect on what Brown, the liberator, the champion of Christ, has striven to effect, and when we remember that he is about to die, slaughtered by the American Republic, the crime assumes an importance co-extensive with that of the nation which commits it — and when we say to ourselves that this nation is one of the glories of the human race; that, like France, like England, like Germany, she is one of the great agents of civilization; that she sometimes even leaves Europe in the rear by the sublime audacity of some of her progressive movements; that she is the Queen of an entire world, and that her brow is irradiated with a glorious halo of freedom, we declare our conviction that John Brown will not die; for we recoil horror-struck from the idea of so great a crime committed by so great a people.

Viewed in a political light, the murder of Brown would be

an irreparable fault. It would penetrate the Union with a gaping fissure which would lead in the end to its entire disruption. It is possible that the execution of Brown might establish slavery on a firm basis in Virginia, but it is certain that it would shake to its centre the entire fabric of American democracy. You preserve your infamy, but you sacrifice your glory. Viewed in a moral light, it seems to me that a portion of the enlightenment of humanity would be eclipsed, that even the ideas of justice and injustice would be obscured on the day which should witness the assassination of Emancipation by Liberty.

As for myself, though I am but a mere atom, yet being, as I am, in common with all other men, inspired with the conscience of humanity, I fall on my knees, weeping before the great starry banner of the New World; and with clasped hands, and with profound and filial respect, I implore the illustrious American Republic, sister of the French Republic, to see to the safety of the universal moral law, to save John Brown, to demolish the threatening scaffold of the 16th of December, and not to suffer that beneath its eyes, and I add, with a shudder, almost by its fault, a crime should be perpetrated surpassing the first fratricide in iniquity.

For — yes, let America know it, and ponder on it well — there is something more terrible than Cain slaying Abel: — It is Washington slaying Spartacus!

VICTOR HUGO.

Hauteville House, Dec. 2d, 1859.

VICTOR HUGO ON AMERICAN SLAVERY.

TO MRS. MARIA WESTON CHAPMAN.

Madame: I have scarcely anything to add to your letter. I would cheerfully sign every line of it. Pursue your holy work. You have with you all great souls and all good hearts.

You are pleased to believe, and to assure me, that my voice, in this august cause of Liberty, will be listened to by the great

American people, whom I love so profoundly, and whose destinies, I am fain to think, are closely linked with the mission of France. You desire me to lift up my voice.

I will do it at once, and I will do it on all occasions. I agree with you in thinking that, within a definite time — that, within a time not distant — the United States will repudiate Slavery with horror! Slavery in such a country! Can there be an incongruity more monstrous? Barbarism installed in the very heart of a country, which is itself the affirmation of civilization; liberty wearing a chain; blasphemy echoing from the altar; the collar of a negro chained to the pedestal of Washington! It is a thing unheard of. I say more, it is impossible. Such a spectacle would destroy itself. The light of the Nineteenth Century alone is enough to destroy it.

What! Slavery sanctioned by law among that illustrious people, who for seventy years have measured the progress of civilization by their march, demonstrated democracy by their power, and liberty by their prosperity! Slavery in the United States! It is the duty of this republic to set such an example no longer. It is a shame, and she was never born to bow her head.

It is not when Slavery is taking leave of old nations, that it should be received by the new. What! When Slavery is departing from Turkey, shall it rest in America? What! Drive it from the hearth of Omar, and adopt it at the hearth of Franklin? No! No! No!

There is an inflexible logic which develops more or less slowly, which fashions, which redresses according to a mysterious plan, perceptible only to great spirits, the facts, the men, the laws, the morals, the people; or better, under all human things, there are things divine.

Let all those great souls who love the United States, as a country, be re-assured. The United States must renounce Slavery, or they must renounce Liberty. They cannot renounce Liberty. They must renounce Slavery, or renounce the Gospel. They will never renounce the Gospel.

Accept, Madame, with my devotion to the cause you advocate, the homage of my respect.

VICTOR HUGO.

6 Juillet, 1851, Paris.

LETTER FROM ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE.

I do not think it is for me, a foreigner, to indicate to the United States the time, the measures, or the men by whom Slavery shall be abolished.

Still, as the persevering enemy of despotism everywhere, and under all its forms, I am pained and astonished by the fact that the freest people in the world is, at the present time, almost the only one among civilized and Christian nations which yet maintains personal servitude; and this, while serfdom itself is about disappearing, where it has not already disappeared, from the most degraded nations of Europe.

An old and sincere friend of Americea, I am uneasy at seeing Slavery retard her progress, tarnish her glory, furnish arms to her detractors, compromise the future career of the Union which is the guaranty of her safety and greatness, and point our beforehand to her, to all her enemies, the spot where they are to strike. As a man, too, I am moved at the spectacle of man's degradation by man, and I hope to see the day when the law will grant equal civil liberty to all the inhabitants of the same empire, as God accords the freedom of the will, without distinction, to the dwellers upon earth.

France, 1855.

LETTER FROM EMILE DE GIRARDIN.

I seize the occasion now offered me to accuse myself of having too long believed, on the faith of American citizens and French travellers, that the slavery of the blacks neither could nor ought, for their own sakes, to be abolished, without a previous initiation to liberty, by labor, instruction, economy, and redemption — an individual purchase of each one by himself.

But this belief I end by classing among those inveterate errors, which are like the rings of a chain, that even the

freest of men drag after them, and even the strongest find it difficult to break.

What I once believed, I believe no longer.

Of all the existing proofs that Liberty is to be conquered or gained, not given, or dealt out by halves, the strongest proof is that, in the United States, the freest of all countries, the maintenance of Slavery is not made a question of time, but of race. Now if the reasons there alleged for the perpetuating and the legalizing of Slavery are true, they will be no less true a thousand years hence than to-day; if they are false, they have no right to impose themselves for a day, for an hour, for a moment. Error has no right against truth; iniquity has no right against equity, for the same reason that the dying have no right against death.

I hold, then, as false — incontestably and absolutely false, — all that blind self-interest and limping common-place are continually repeating, in order to perpetuate and legalize Slavery in the United States; just as I hold as false all that was said and printed before 1789, to perpetuate and legitimate serfdom; and all that is still said in Russia, in favor of the same outrage of men against the nature of man. The slavery of the blacks is the opprobrium of the whites. Thus every wrong brings its own chastisement.

The punishment of the American people is to be the last of the nations, while it is also the first. It is the first, by that Liberty of which it has rolled back the limits, and it is the last by that Slavery whose inconsistency it tolerates; for there are no slaves without tyrants. What matter whether the tyrant be *regal* or *legal*?

Paris, (Office of La Presse,) 1855.

LETTER FROM M. CARNOT.

The question of Slavery is intimately connected with questions of general policy.

The Pagan republics had Slavery for their basis. They were so organized that they could not subsist without it; and so when Slavery was shaken down, they perished. Liberty for the few, on condition of keeping the many in servitude — such was the principle of the ancient societies.

Christianity bids another morality triumph, — that of human brotherhood. Modern societies recognize the principle that each citizen increases the domain of his own liberty by sharing it with his fellows. Republican France put this principle in practice; at her two great epochs of emancipation, she hastened to send Liberty to her colonial possessions.

North America presents a sad anomaly — a contradiction to the general rule with which we have prefaced these reflections, and thence the enemies of Liberty try to justify their departure from it.

They pretend to believe that the Republic of the United States rests on a basis analogous to that of the Pagan republics; and that the application of the new morality will be dangerous to it. But it is not so. Liberty in the United States is founded on reason, on custom, on patriotism, and on experience already old. She can but gain by diffusion even to prodigality. In the United States, Slavery is more than elsewhere a monstrosity, protected only by private interests. It is a source of corruption and barbarism which delays America in the path of European civilization. It is a fatal example that she presents to Europe, to turn her from the pursuit of American independence.

Paris, 1855.

LETTER FROM M. PASSY.

Humanity is governed by laws which continually impel it to extend, without ceasing, the sphere of its knowledge. There is no discovery which does not conduct it to new discoveries; each generation adds its own to the mass which it has received from the past, and thus from age to age are the strength and riches of civilization augmented.

Now it is one of the numerous proofs of the benevolent purposes of the Creator, that every step of mental progress strengthens the ideas of duty and justice, of which humanity makes application in its acts. Human society, as it gains light, does not merely learn thereby the better to profit by its labors. It gains, at the same time, clearer and surer notions of moral order. It discerns evil where it did not at first suspect its existence; and no sooner does it perceive the evil than it seeks the means to suppress it.

This is what, in our day, has awakened so much opposition to Slavery. Thanks to the flood of light already received, society begins to comprehend, not only its iniquity in principle, but all the degradation and suffering it scatters in the lands where it exists. A cry of reprobation arises, and associations are formed to hasten its abolition.

We may, without fear, assert that it will be with Slavery as with all the other remnants of ignorance and original barbarism. The day will come when it must disappear, with the rest of the institutions which have been found inconsistant with the moral feelings to which the development of human reason gives the mastery.

Let those reflect who, at this day, constitute themselves the defenders of Slavery. They have against them the most irresistible of all powers — that of moral truth becoming more and more distinct — that of human conceptions necessarily rising with the growth in knowledge of the divine will. Their defeat is, sooner or later, inevitable.

How much wiser would they be, did they resign themselves to the preparation for a reform, the necessity for which presents itself with such inflexible urgency. It is, doubtless, a work of difficulty. Freemen require other conditions than

those to which they were subjected by the lash; but the requisite changes may be effected. Wise precautions and temporary arrangements, united with the injunctions of authority, will not fail of success. Proprietors who dread emancipation! show to your people a little of that benevolence which so promptly subdues those who are unaccustomed to it, and you will find them docile and industrious as freemen. It is Slavery which corrupts and deteriorates the faculties which God has given to all for the amelioration of their destinies and the enjoyment of existence. Liberty, on the contrary, animates and develops them. Human activity rises to extend its conquests, more ingenious and energetic at her reviving breath.

May such assertions as these, conformable as they are to the experience of all ages, no longer meet in America the contradictions which are long extinct in Europe. May those States of the Union where Slavery still counts its partizans, hasten to prepare for its abolition. Storms are gathering over the seat of injustice. Prosperity, gained at the expense of humanity, flows from a source which time will necessarily dry up. There can exist no durable prosperity on earth, but in consistency with the laws of God; and his laws command men to love and serve each other as brethren.

Nice, January 28th, 1855.

LETTER FROM MAZZINI.

London, May 1, 1854.

Dear Sir: I have delayed to the present moment my answering your kind invitation, in the hope that I should, perhaps, be enabled to give a better answer than a written one; but I find that neither health nor business will allow me to attend. I must write, and express to you, and through you to your friends, how much I feel grateful for your having asked me to attend the first meeting of the "North of England Anti-Slavery Association;" how earnestly I sympathize with the noble aim you are going to pursue; how deeply I

shall commune with your efforts, and help, if I can, their success. No man ought ever to inscribe on his flag the sacred word "Liberty," who is not prepared to shake hands cordially with those, whoever they are, who will attach their names to the constitution of your association. Liberty may be the godlike gift of all races, of all nations, of every being who bears on his brow the stamp of MAN, or sink to the level of a narrow and mean self-interest, unworthy of the tears of the good and the blood of the brave. I am yours, because I believe in the unity of God; yours, because I believe in the unity of mankind; yours, because I believe in the educatibility of the whole human race, and in a heavenly law of infinite progression for all; yours, because the fulfilment of this law implies the consciousness and the responsibility of the agent, and neither consciousness nor responsibility can exist in slavery; yours, because I have devoted my life to the emancipation of my own country. And I would feel unequal to this task, a mean rebel, not an apostle of truth and justice, had I not felt from my earliest years that the right and duty of revolting against lies and tyranny were grounded on a far higher sphere than that of the welfare of one single nation; that they must start from belief in a principle, which will have sooner or later to be universally applied: "*One God, one humanity, one law, one love from all for all.*" Blessed be your efforts, if they start from this high ground of a common faith; if you do not forget, whilst at work for the emancipation of the black race, the millions of white slaves, suffering, struggling, expiring in Italy, in Poland, in Hungary, throughout all Europe; if you always remember that free men only can achieve the work of freedom, and that Europe's appeal for the abolition of slavery in other lands will not weigh all-powerful before God and men, whilst Europe herself shall be desecrated by arbitrary, tyrannical power, by czars, emperors, and popes.

Ever faithfully yours,

JOSEPH MAZZINI.

Rev. Dr. BEARD, Manchester.

ANOTHER LETTER FROM MAZZINI.

LONDON, March 21st, 1859.

DEAR SIR: I beg to apologize for being so late in acknowledging the receipt of $112 09, subscribed by you and others at the end of the lecture delivered at your institution by my friend, Mm. Jessie M. White Mario, toward our Italian school, &c.

I am very much pleased at my honored friend's first success and response to her efforts in the United States, coming from Young America, to whom Young Italy looks for sympathy and support in her approaching struggle, and my thanks are the thanks of all the members, both teachers and pupils, of our Italian school.

We are fighting the same sacred battle for freedom and the emancipation of the oppressed — you, Sir, against *negro*, we against *white* slavery. The cause is truly identical; for, depend upon it, the day in which we shall succeed in binding to one freely accepted pact twenty-six millions of Italians, we shall give what we cannot now, an active support to the cause you pursue. We are both the servants of the God who says, "Before Me there is no Master, no Slave, no Man, no Woman, but only Human Nature, which must be everywhere responsible, therefore free."

May God bless your efforts and ours! May the day soon arrive in which the word *bondage* will disappear from our living languages, and only point out a historical record! And, meanwhile, let the knowledge that we, all combatants under the same flag, do, through time and space, commune in love and faith, and strengthen one another against the unavoidable suffering which we must meet on the way.

Believe me, my dear Sir,

Very gratefully yours,

JOSEPH MAZZINI.

LETTER FROM N. TOURGUENEFF.

An admirable work, bearing the title, "Russia and the Russians," — on the condition and prospects of Russia, — was published in Paris, in 1847, by Monsieur Tourgueneff. This accomplished gentlemen is a Russian Noble, (exiled and under sentence of death since 1825,) for having cast in his lot with the Serfs by advocating their emancipation while minister of Finance and member of the Imperial Council of State. He is one of those truly wise and good men whose opinions cannot fail to have great influence wherever they are known. With him, Freedom is a question of fundamental right, as well as of national policy. His testimony, therefore, in regard to the Anti-Slavery struggle in America and its advocates, is deserving of the highest consideration.

Paris, September 29, 1855.

Madame, — Seeing you on the point of departing for America, I cannot forbear entreating you to be the bearer of my tribute of respect and admiration to one of your compatriots. Need I add that I have in view our holy cause of human freedom, and one of its most eminent defenders, Mr. Garrison? Every word he utters is dictated by the deepest sense of justice; but his recent discourse on the anniversary of British Colonial Emancipation is distinguished not only by its profound feeling of sympathy for the emancipated, but by that rigorously just reasoning, and that clear, firm, and above all, moral logic which leads him to prefer the separation of the States to the continuance of Slavery. It is by this trait that I recognize the true Abolitionist, and the truly worthy man. It was with the truest joy that I read those strong and noble words, each going straight to its end, acknowledging no law superior to the sentiment of right engraven in the human conscience by its divine Creator, and disdaining all the common-place sophistry of weakness and hypocrisy that is so often employed in these discussions.

Deeply touched by this discourse of Mr. Garrison, I feel that a Cause so holy, defended by such advocates, could not fail to triumph, if urged forward without delay. Every action, every word, which brings nearer the time of this triumph, is a blessing to millions of unfortunate beings.

May Almighty God crown with success the generous labors of all these noble men, who, after all, are but following the commands and walking in the ways traced by his holy will!

May I entreat of you, Madame, the kindness of presenting to Mr. Garrison the accompanying copy of my work, by which he will see that a co-laborer in another hemisphere has long wrought in the same vineyard of the Lord; if not with the same renown, I may, at least, venture to say with the same disinterestedness, with the same self-abnegation, with the same love for the oppressed. Even the efforts I made in their behalf they could never directly know, for exile and proscription have compelled me to live far from my own land, and to plead the cause of human rights in a language which is neither theirs nor mine. I am thoroughly persuaded that all success obtained in America in the cause of the colored race will be eminently serviceable to my poor countrymen in Russia. It is then, first as a man, and secondly as a Russian, that I hail the efforts of Mr. Garrison and his fellow-laborers for the deliverance of their country from the hideous plague-spot of Slavery.

Receive, Madame, my earnest good wishes for your voyage. May Heaven grant that in again beholding your native country, you may there find new consolations and fresh encouragements to persevere in the great Cause which you have made the principal object of your life.

Accept, at the same time, the expression of my high respect.

N. TOURGUENEFF.

To Mrs. Henry Grafton Chapman.

LETTER FROM HUMBOLDT.

In 1856, Baron von Humboldt caused the following letter to be inserted in the *Spenersche Zeitung* : —

"Under the title of *Essai Politique sur l' Isle de Cuba*, published in Paris in 1826, I collected together all that the large edition of my *Voyage aux Regions Equinoxiales du Nouveau Continent* contained upon the state of agriculture and slavery in the Antilles. There appeared at the same time an English and a Spanish translation of this work, the latter entitled *Ensayo Politico sobre la Isle de Cuba*, neither of which omitted any of the frank and open remarks which feelings of humanity had inspired. But there appears just now, strangely enough, translated from the Spanish translation, and not from the French original, and published by Derby and Jackson, in New York, an octavo volume of 400 pages, under the title of *The Island of Cuba*, by Alexander Humboldt; with notes and a preliminary essay by J. S. Thrasher. The translator, who has lived a long time on that beautiful island, has enriched my work by more recent *data* on the subject of the numerical standing of the population, of the cultivation of the soil, and the state of trade, and, generally speaking, exhibited a charitable moderation in his discussion of conflicting opinions. I owe it, however, to a moral feeling, that is now as lively in me as it was in 1826, publicly to complain that in a work which bears my name, the entire seventh chapter of the Spanish translation, with which my *essai politique* ended, has been arbitrarily omitted. To this very portion of my work I attach greater importance than to any astronomical observations, experiments of magnetic intensity, or statistical statements. "I have examined with frankness (I here repeat the words I used thirty years ago) whatever concerns the organization of human society in the colonies, the unequal distribution of the rights and enjoyments of life, and the impending dangers which the wisdom of legislators and the moderation of freemen can avert, whatever may be the form of government.

"It is the duty of the traveller who has been an eye-witness of all that torments and degrades human nature to cause the

complaints of the unfortunate to reach those whose duty it is to relieve them. I have repeated, in this treatise, the fact that the ancient legislation of Spain on the subject of slavery is less inhuman and atrocious than that of the slave States on the American continent, north or south of the equator.

"A steady advocate as I am for the most unfettered expression of opinion in speech or in writing, I should never have thought of complaining if I had been attacked on account of my statements; but I do think I am entitled to demand that in the free States of the continent of America, people should be allowed to read what has been permitted to circulate from the first year of its appearance in a Spanish translation.

"ALEXANDER VON HUMBOLDT.

"BERLIN, July, 1856."

HUMBOLDT ON WEBSTER.

"For thirty years — for thirty years (and he counted them on his fingers) — you have made no progress about slavery; you have gone backward — very far backward in many respects about that. I think especially of your law of 1850, that law by which a man in a free State, where he ought to be free, can be made a slave of. That I always call the *Webster* law.

"I always before liked Mr. Webster. He was a great man. I knew him, and always till then liked him. But, ever after that, I hated him. He was the man who made it. If he wanted to prevent it, he could have done it. That is the reason why I call it the Webster law. And ever after that, I hated him."

I made some remarks about Mr. Webster's influence on that point not being confined to a political sphere, but of his also carrying with him that circle of literary men with whom he was connected. "Yes," said he, "it was he who did it all; and those very men not connected with politics, who

ought to have stood against it, as you say, he moved with it. You came from New England, where there is so much anti-slavery feeling, and where you have learned to think slavery is bad. While you are here in Europe, you may see things which you think bad; but I know Europe, and I tell you that you will find nothing here that is one half so bad as your slavery is."

These were the opinions of Baron Humboldt, a Christian philosopher of world-wide renown, whose views of men and of nations went further to establish their character, than any man now living. As Humboldt thought, the Christian world would think. Mr. Webster, as one of Fillmore's Cabinet, approved the Fugitive Act, and lent his personal and official influence to sustain it. By doing that, he let down his own moral nature. He not only disgraced himself, but the nation who placed him in that conspicuous position. We would not speak unkindly of any man; but who that reads and reflects can be ignorant of the fact, that all who sustain or sanction that infamous enactment must tarnish their own characters, and degrade themselves in their own opinion, and in the opinion of all good men?

LETTER FROM O. LAFAYETTE.

PARIS, April 26, 1851.

To M. Victor Schœlcher, Representative of the People.

MY DEAR COLLEAGUE, — You have been so obliging as to ask for my views and impressions respecting one of the most important events of our epoch, — the Abolition of Slavery in the French Colonies. I know well that you have an almost paternal interest in this question. You have contributed more than any one to the emancipation of the blacks, in our possessions beyond the seas, and you have enjoyed the double pleasure of seeing the problem completely resolved, and resolved by the Government of the Republic. At the present time, wearied by controversy, the mind loves to repose upon

certain and solid progress, which future events can neither alter nor destroy, and which are justly considered as the true conquests of civilization and humanity. In examining the Emancipation of the Slaves in the French Antilles, from the point of view of the material interests of France, it may be variously appreciated; but the immense moral benefit of the act of Emancipation cannot be contested.

In one day, and as by the stroke of a wand, one hundred and fifty thousand of human beings were snatched from the degradation in which they had been held by former legislation, and resumed their rank in the great human family. And we should not omit to state, that this great event was accomplished without our witnessing any of those disorders and struggles which had been threatened, in order to perplex the consciences of the Friends of Abolition.

Will the momentary obstruction of material interests be opposed to these great results? When has it ever been possible in this world to do much good, without seeming at the same time to do a little harm?

I have sometimes heard it said that the conditions of labor in the Colonies would have been less disturbed, if the preparation and the accomplishment of the Emancipation had been left to the colonists themselves; but you know better than I, my dear Colleague, that these assertions are hardly sincere.

We cannot but recollect with what unanimity and what vehemence the colonial councils opposed, in 1844 and 1845, the Ameliorations that we sought to introduce into the condition of the Slaves.

Is it not evident that this disposition would have rendered impossible the time of a system of transition, which indeed was attempted without success in the English colonies? For myself, I am quite convinced that it would have been impossible to effect the emancipation otherwise than as it *was* effected, that is to say, in one day, and by a single decree. I would add also, that in my opinion the Abolition of Slavery in our colonies would have remained a long time unaccomplished, if France had not been in Revolution: and if it be easy to understand why all men of the white race do not consent to the Revolution of 1848, I cannot conceive that a single man of color can be found, who does not regard it with benedictions.

Furthermore, my dear Colleague, this great question of the

Abolition of Negro Slavery, which has my entire sympathy, appears to me to have established its importance throughout the world. At the present time, the States of the Peninsula, if I do not deceive myself, are the only European powers who still continue to possess Slaves; and America, while continuing to uphold Slavery, feels daily more and more how heavily this plague weighs upon her destinies.

In expressing to you, my dear Colleague, how much I rejoice in these results, I do not gratify my personal feelings alone. I obey also my family traditions.

You know the interest which my grandfather, General LaFayette, took in the emancipation of the negroes. You know what he had begun to do at the Habitation de la Gabrielle, and what he intended to do there. It was not among the least regrets of his life, that he was stopped in that enterprise.

Pardon, my dear Colleague, the details into which I have been led. I know well that I can hardly be indiscreet in speaking on this subject to you. I rely upon those sentiments of friendship which you have always testified for me, and which differences of opinion respecting other political questions cannot weaken.

With fresh assurances of my friendship and consideration,

Your obedient servant and devoted Colleague,

O. LAFAYETTE,

Representative of the People, (Seine et Maine.)

TESTIMONY OF GEN. LAFAYETTE. 'When I am indulging in my views of American liberty, it is mortifying to be reminded that a large portion of the people in that very country are SLAVES. It is a dark spot on the face of the nation.' 'I never would have drawn my sword in the cause of America, if I could have conceived that thereby I was helping to found A NATION OF SLAVES.'

LETTER FROM EDWARD BAINES.

To what source shall we trace the heroic deeds and immortal productions of the ancient Greeks, but to the fount of Liberty? In what mould were those men cast who made Rome the mistress of Italy, and the world but the mould of Liberty? Among whom did art, letters, and commerce revive, after the sleep of the dark ages, but among the citizens of free republics? Where was the Reformation cradled but among the sons of Liberty? What passages of the history of England are held in the fondest remembrance, if not Magna Charta, the Bill of Rights, and the charters and statutes which secure civil and religious freedom? In the history of the United States, what event yet awakens the proud enthusiasm of a whole people, in comparison with the Declaration of Independence? Among the colonies of England, what Act arouses a joy the deepest and most universal but that of Slave Emancipation? Does not every oppressed nation groan in its bondage? Does not every free nation exult in its freedom? Would not every slave leap to break his chains?

If in any nation, slavery is the most monstrous of inconsistencies, it is in a free republic; and if in any community it is the most flagrant of sins, it is in a Christian community.

Nothing is more notorious than the tendency of self-interest to blind the judgment; and it is, therefore, the part of wisdom for those who are interested, to ask in any question of difficulty the judgment of those who are disinterested. If American Christians will accept the opinion of English Christians, they will learn that it is unanimously and unhesitatingly adverse to slavery. Without distinction of party or sect, Englishmen condemn the system of slaveholding; but if any are more earnest than others in expressing this condemnation, it is those who rejoice in the establishment of American Independence, and who have most sympathy with free institutions. It is not assumed that all masters are cruel, or all slaves miserable. But it is known that masters may be cruel with impunity, and that slaves are, to the last hour of life, devoid of security for person, property, home, wife, or children. To reflect on these things shocks the understanding and heart of

all English Christians. They feel deeply for their Christian brethren and sisters in bondage, and it is difficult for them to believe that other Christian brethren can be the means of so great an injustice. A Christian inflicting the lash, as it is inflicted in the Slave States of America, or selling his fellow man for money, seems to them an incomprehensible thing. Be it remembered, there is no national or political prejudice in this. English Christians felt the same when the slave owners were their own countrymen, and so strongly did they feel it as to buy the freedom of the slaves at a great price. May they not, then, appeal to the Christians of the United States, to declare uncompromising hostility against the slave system? Let slavery be abolished, and the United States would rise higher in the estimation of the Old World, than if all the New World were embraced in their Union, and all were one golden California.

EDWARD BAINES.

Leeds Mercury Office, Nov. 9th, 1856.

TESTIMONY OF DANIEL O'CONNELL.

I will now turn to a subject of congratulation: I mean the Anti-Slavery Societies of America — those noble-hearted men and women, who, through difficulties and dangers, have proved how hearty they are in the cause of abolition. I hail them all as my friends, and wish them to regard me as a brother. I wish for no higher station in the world; but I do covet the honor of being a brother with these American abolitionists. In this country, the abolitionists are in perfect safety; here we have fame and honor; we are lauded and encouraged by the good; we are smiled upon and cheered by the fair; we are bound together by godlike truth and charity; and though we have our differences as to points of faith, we have no differences as to this point, and we proceed in our useful career esteemed and honored. But it is not so with our anti-slavery friends in America: there they are vilified, there

they are insulted. Why, did not very lately a body of men — of gentlemen, so called — of persons who would be angry if you denied them that cognomen, and would even be ready to call you out to share a rifle and a ball — did not such "gentlemen" break in upon an Anti-Slavery Society in America; aye, upon a ladies' Anti-Slavery Society, and assault them in a most cowardly manner? And did they not denounce the members of that Society? And where did this happen? Why, in Boston — in enlightened Boston, the capital of a non-slaveholding State. In this country, the abolitionists have nothing to complain of; but in America, they are met with the bowie-knife and lynch law! Yes! in America, you have had martyrs; your cause has been stained with blood; the voice of your brethren's blood crieth from the ground, and riseth high, not, I trust, for vengeance, but for mercy upon those who have thus treated them. But you ought not to be discouraged, nor relax in your efforts. Here you have honor. A human being cannot be placed in a more glorious position than to take up such a cause under such circumstances. I am delighted to be one of a Convention in which are so many of such great and good men. I trust that their reception will be such as that their zeal may be greatly strengthened to continue their noble struggle. I have reason to hope that, in this assembly, a voice will be raised which will roll back in thunder to America, which will mingle with her mighty waves, and which will cause one universal shout of liberty to be heard throughout the world. O, there is not a delegate from the Anti-Slavery Societies of America, but ought to have his name, aye, her name, written in characters of immortality. The Anti-Slavery Societies in America are deeply persecuted, and are deserving of every encouragement which we can possibly give them. I would that I had the eloquence to depict their character aright; but my tongue falters, and my powers fail, while I attempt to describe them. They are the true friends of humanity, and would that I had a tongue to describe aright the mighty majesty of their undertaking!—[*Extract from a speech of Daniel O'Connell, at the World's Anti-Slavery Convention in London*, 1840.]